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JEW. AND GENTILE:

A Sermon

By HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH CHURCH, BROOKLYN.

JUNE 24, 1877.



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JEW AND GENTILE.

"But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians." ACTS xix., 34.

THIS was a terrific tumult raised in Ephesus by a merchant. When an attempt was made on the part of those who were aggrieved by the riot that took place to defend themselves by exposing their principles and their processes, the mob forbade them to speak. How far the world has grown since that time is shown by the fact that when in our day a merchant attempts to hold up to shame and disgrace men that are unoffending, there is no riot and no mob, but for the space, not of two hours, but of two days (which in New York is an age for one thing to be of interest) the whole people have sympathized with those that are wronged.

It is not my purpose to-night to make any personal sermon. Certainly, if I had the disposition to do it, a fairer opportunity never could present itself. I have the pleasure of the acquaintance of the gentleman whose name has been the occasion of so much excitement—Mr. Seligman. I have summered with his family for several years. I am acquainted with him, with his honored wife, and with his sons and daughters; and I have learned to respect and love them. During weeks

and months I was with them at the Twin Mountain House; and not only did they behave in a manner becoming Christian ladies and gentlemen, but they behaved in a manner that ought to put to shame many Christian ladies and gentlemen. They were my helpers; and they were not only present at the Sunday services at the Twin Mountain House, but they were present at the daily prayer meetings on week days, volunteering services of kindness. I learned to feel that they were my deacons, and that in the ministration of Christian service they were beyond the power of prejudice and did not confine themselves to the limitations which might be supposed to be prescribed by their race. Therefore, when I heard of the unnecessary offense that had been cast upon Mr. Seligman, I felt that no other person could have been singled out that would have brought home to me the injustice more sensibly than he. With this statement I dismiss the personal matter.

There are about seven million Jews in existence in all the nations of the earth. They are living in almost every land under the sun. They excel all other people in being despised. There is not another race or people that is in such a sense a benefactor of the human race as they are, and have been. There is not another people under the sun that is treated so like despicable miscreants as they are, and have been. For two thousand years they have experienced hatred and contempt and persecution. They are an extraordinary race by their faults, by their virtues, and by their long experience. They have been twined in the history of every

nation, oriental or occidental, ancient or modern; and yet they have never lost their race distinctions. They have mingled, but not *mixed*, with the nations which held them.

From the Hebrews the world has received a treasure of benefit such as no other people has ever conferred upon mankind; and those things in which we count ourselves most advanced, and which we boast as being blessings which we are conferring upon the nascent nations of our times, were derived as seed-corn from this notable people; and we are but raising harvests of that which they raised three thousand years ago.

“In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

That was promised to Abraham, and it has been fulfilled to the letter; for every civilized nation on the globe is to-day, if it would understand the source of its benefits, blessed in the descendants of Abraham. Those heroic people stand pre-eminent as the unrecognized benefactors of the human race. If any people ever lived whose faults might be condoned in consideration of their invaluable service to religion and to civilization, it is the Hebrews. If any people ever had a full measure of every form and degree of injustice meted out to them, it is the Hebrews.

Happily, in all the world the moral sense of mankind is checking the indignities and correcting the prejudices which for four thousand years have been raining upon the heads of this much-wronged people. Now and then a flash of the old fire breaks out, such as we have recently seen, but it is transient, it is feeble, and it serves

to show how weak the malign elements in civilization are, and how much generosity and justice are infused into the popular feelings.

Let us look at the contributions which have been made to the world's stock in civilization by the Hebrews. It may surprise some to be told that commonwealth, as we understand it in republican governments, is unquestionably of the desert, and that our institutions sprang from the loins of Moses's mind; but it is true that he reared, in his retirement and relative obscurity, the pillars—or, at any rate, the foundations on which we are rearing the pillars and the superstructure. The commonwealth of the Israelites contained in it the seeds of all subsequent commonwealths.

The people that most saturate themselves with the whole economy of the Old Testament is the people among whom popular liberty is most likely to be developed; for, although the doctrines of the New Testament give to man in the ideal such an elevation as that wrong toward him becomes an indignity toward God, yet the working forms of political institutions which lie at the foundation of popular liberty and popular right are to be found in the Old Testament rather in the New. An appeal to the people on all great questions of polity; the educating all the people to have a public sentiment about their own affairs; the attempt to conduct a government, whether by prophet, by priest, or by king, for the benefit of the people themselves—these fundamental elements belonged, and I think belonged first, to the Hebrew Commonwealth. The more one studies the genius of legislation in the earlier periods of

the national existence of the Hebrews, the more he will have reason to perceive that we are deriving, as it were, the very nourishment of our public life from those remote times, and that we are indebted to this people for those very things which make us able to despise anybody or anything.

Closely allied to the organization of government, and indeed precedent to it, as the very condition of successful and continuous government, is the household. Now, the family emerged from barbaric forms earlier among the Hebrews than among any other people, and passed into that condition which has enabled it to perpetuate itself. For although, according to the teaching of our Master, Moses permitted polygamy, it was only by sufferance and on conditions that would surely extinguish it, and that did extinguish it. So it may be said that, in spite of the patriarchal example of early times and later times, the great body of common people among the Hebrews were brought up in the spirit of monogamy, and the household was constituted by the love of one man to one woman. In the rearing and governing of a family of children the household was a great school of all virtue and all integrity. If there be one thing that has been striking in the economy of the Hebrews from the ancient day it is their care of their children; the instruction that they gave to them; their guidance of them in their rising up and sitting down, their going out and coming in. Their great aim was to instruct their children in a knowledge of their own institutions; in a knowledge of the history of their people; and in a knowledge of those ordinances

of God which had made that history celebrated. On no other point was there so much urgency in the instruction of their children as on that of character; and in no other nation were children ever reared with more care. That feature was continued down through all the mediæval darkness, and is characteristic in Jewish households to this very hour. In intelligence, in home life, in purity, in exaltation of sentiment, and in extraordinary care in the teaching of children, there are not to be found in the palmiest communities of the best Christian households those that surpass the best families of Jews at this time. We have borrowed their example, and are rearing our children after the pattern and inspiration of the Jewish household as it has existed from the days of Moses onward.

I cannot fail to point out, too, how, in that oriental land, and in that early day, the virtue of industry, of personal independence, of work, was understood and enforced. During the time when Plato declared that in his ideal republic there should be no mechanics; during that long intermediate period when to be a working man was to be shut out from all hope of honor and elevation in society; during the times when monarchy and aristocracy frowned upon labor; clear down to the day when, contrary to the fundamental principles of our institutions and the design of our fathers, slavery in this land made work dishonorable, and was eating out the inner life of it; from four thousand years ago down to this day—work has been honorable in the Jewish household; and that motto, that proverb stands, which stood at that early period: "He

who brings his child up without a trade brings him up to be a thief." On that principle the children of the richest Jews, of Jews in the highest station, were taught how to maintain themselves by their own hands and by their own industry. The making of work honorable is one of the boons which God has given to the human race through this remarkable people.

Then we are to take notice how in the Jewish nation, from the very earliest day, woman took that position to which she has been coming for two thousand years since through the inspirations of Christianity. While all around them, in the barbaric East, woman was the degraded object of man's lust, or of his convenience as the drudge of the household, at that very time the Jewish institutions were ministered to by priestesses; by women of singular virtue and sagacity and eminence. In Greece a woman was not even permitted to go to the door to greet her husband or son as he came from the battle-field. She was not allowed to know music or poetry or philosophy, if she would be virtuous. There were women in Greece who were educated to all the embellishments and arts of life; education in Greece among women was given with a large hand, and they were educated in everything that we consider, to-day, as most befitting the noblest women; but alas! no woman was so instructed unless she was to be a courtesan. If a woman was to be a mother, and a woman honored for domestic virtue, she must be ignorant, and must not even show her face in a public assembly, and she must not appear unveiled in the streets. But while such was the law in intellectual and artistic Greece, in Palestine

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the mother, the wife or the daughter with unashamed and unveiled face might look upon any man; and if called to any function, there was no public sentiment and no law that prevented her assuming that function. Whatever a woman could do well, and was called of God by inspiration to do, that she was permitted to do; and she stood honored by what she was. That invaluable contribution to humanity we derived from the early example of this great people.

They also gave to the world, by their ancient economy, a religion whose genius was the development of manhood. In other words, they gave to the world an ethical religion, as distinguished from a worshiping and superstitious religion. Although the Jew made manifest every office of devotion and reverence, and although you might select from the Jewish writers saints as eminent in observances as any others; yet the distinctive peculiarity of religion among the Israelites was that it had a practical drift as regards the conduct of men. It did not expend itself in lyrics and prayers and worship. It descended to the character of men, and sought first, and above all other faiths of that age, to develop manhood. For the whole flow of that word "righteousness" in the Old Testament is the equivalent of our word "manhood," in modern phrase, and *seeking after righteousness* was the distinctive peculiarity of the Hebrew religion. It bred a race of men who put into the building of themselves the attributes of truth, of justice, of humanity, of morality, of gentleness and of humility. It reared men who had no equals, and with whom there was nothing that could compare in their own time.

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The Greeks built better temples than the Hebrews; but though the Hebrew hand never carved a marble, it did better—it carved men. While the Greeks were so corrupt in social matters that they had not moral sense enough to hold the State together; while their national life was perpetually breaking down under the stress of human nature for lack of manly character; while they were making wondrous pictures: while they were building world-renowned temples; while they were carving heroes in gold and ivory than which the world never saw greater, and will never see greater; while they were making a *simulacrum* of mankind, the Hebrews were making *mankind*—they were making *man*. Such was the very drift of their religion. And the apostle, having received the culture of Greece at the feet of his great teacher, and knowing what it meant, declared that his brethren sought after righteousness, but that they did not well understand what were the instruments by which the higher development of manhood was to be attained. They sought to develop righteousness by institutions; but Paul says that no race of people ever did or ever will, merely by institutions, develop the highest form of character. That must be done by following a living example under a heroic inspiration.

Christ is the law. That is, he undertook to do that which the whole law aimed to do, but which through the weakness of the flesh it could not do. He came making virtue luminous, and interpreting to mankind so much of the divine disposition as can possibly be shown in the human flesh, by making possible to men that which a man longs, prays, yearns, sighs to be, and then helping

them to come to it—namely, to “a perfect man”; to “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” But this Jewish people set the example, by their religion, which led men to seek manhood as the chief thing under all circumstances—a larger, broader, nobler, diviner manhood than ever the Gentiles dreamed of.

The moral sense of mankind, the vivid conception of right and wrong among men, sprang from the training of the Jews. Hunger and thirst after righteousness has been characteristic of the Jew from an early age; and we have derived an impulse in that direction from his writings and from his example. The Greek gave to the world æsthetic gifts. Whatever was exquisite in beauty, whatever was fine in symmetry, whatever was rare in proportion, whatever was harmonious in art, the Greek longed for; but he never longed for the good. The Jew was deficient in the perception of the beautiful as it was developed in matter; but his soul was all aflame with a conception of the beautiful as it was developed in the mind; and he sought to create in man inwardly by the spirit that which the Greeks sought to create in him outwardly by the flesh.

“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

In all the literature of the globe you cannot find another such aspiration; and this is but one of ten thousand of the breathings by the Jewish mind of its yearning after the divine.

The moral literature, too, which has come from this people has been a treasure to the world. The human race has fed on Homer, on Plato, on Aristotle, on

Seneca, on Cicero, and in the far Orient on one or two notable authors; but nowhere has there been such food for the inner man as in the wisdom of Solomon, in the lyrics of David and his school, and in the cry of those great solitary statesmen, the Hebrew prophets, who were the masters of statesmanship in the age in which they lived.

But to us and to all Christendom the Hebrew should be held sacred for that gift without name and without price, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" is a sentence that ought to make the Israelites sacred to us from association and from history, if from nothing else. The ideal man of the ages was Jesus Christ. The likeness of so much of the divine nature as can dwell in human flesh was Jesus Christ. The grandest interpreter of the Old Testament Scripture was Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is but an epitome of the great truths which had been wrought out in the experience and observation of the thousands of years of God's people preceding. Jesus Christ gathered them together and brought them as grain in a granary into the Sermon on the Mount; but they grew in a thousand fields dispersed through the ages. To be sure, he made them more noble by insphering them in a spiritual light, and showing what their outcome was, and was to be; but they were the Old Testament economies; and the Sermon on the Mount, into which they were gathered, comes to us not simply from Jesus Christ, but from his ancestors throughout all the period of the Jewish commonwealth.

But if one turns from moral functions to secular, it may be said that no people ever taught the world such a lesson of endurance, of indestructible manhood, under every conceivable oppression and wrong, as the Jews have. No abuse that can be heaped upon man has been spared from the head of this persecuted people. From the days of the Roman emperors they have been objects of cruelty in every part of the civilized world. They have everywhere been denied citizenship. Everywhere they have been denied not only equal rights, but the commonest rights of humanity. They have been obliged to clothe themselves so that their very garments were a badge of contempt. They have been shut up in certain territories. They have been fleeced, cheated, persecuted with the cruelest instruments of wrong by those who sought to wrest from them their supposed riches. They have been emptied out of countries where they had taken up their abode. For instance, from Spain seventy thousand families were driven suddenly into exile, not more than one-fifth of them surviving. That cruel exodus was repeated time and time again in various nations, from hundred years to hundred years, under the oppressions of superstitious peoples. Did a plague break out in Hungary? The Jews had poisoned the people, and a mob wreaked vengeance upon their households. Was there black death in Germany? The whole country was in cruel riot to avenge their sufferings on the persecuted Jews.

But this remarkable race, though fined, robbed, treated with the utmost injustice and cruelty, and kicked

out from their abiding place again and again, they could not be destroyed. Hope sprang immortal in their soul. With tenacity, with toughness, with an ineradicable courage, with a persistence in their own faith, and with a trust in their own national stock, they have marched through I know not how many generations of persecution. The legend of "The Wandering Jew" is true—not of any one person, but of a people. It was the nation of the Jews that was the "Wandering Jew"; and all that has ever been dreamed by poets or invented by the imagination of the miseries of the "Wandering Jew" has been fulfilled more than fourfold upon the head of this great and wonderful race. They have never sat down in discouragement, but have repaired again and again and again their wasted fortunes, and erected schools and synagogues, and amassed property, and served the State, and wrought for manhood. It has been the very genius of the Hebrew people to work for the welfare of mankind by working for their own welfare. All their struggles for existence, and all their conflicts for equal rights, have done much to produce that spirit of toleration which is found throughout the civilized nations of the globe. They fought the battle of liberty in fighting for their own right to live. The conflict in England by which the disfranchised Jews were at last permitted to have a name, and to have citizenship, and the rights of a citizen under the Government, was one of the most enlightening and strengthening of all the moral movements in your time and mine. And that which took place in England took place in Germany, in Holland, in Spain, in

Portugal, in France, in Switzerland, in Hungary, and in Austria generally. The Jews, everywhere persecuted, everywhere bruised and crushed in the root, everywhere disbranched, everywhere defoliated, everywhere robbed of their precious fruit, have sprung to life again like the mulberry-tree, which is fed upon and plucked by the silk-weaving worm, but which, though stripped of one crop of leaves, produces another and another. This extraordinary people have set an example to humanity of indomitable courage in the endurance of whatever men can put upon them and yet living and thriving. If ever a race was heroic this race has been.

In its long and dreary way the indomitable spirit of this great people has not flinched. They have held fast to their faith. When for the sake of saving themselves they were outwardly obliged to conform to a cruel reigning Christianity, interiorly, in the church, in the sanctuary of their own households, they were faithful to the religion of their fathers. And, not content with simply their own advancement, they have in almost every age and in almost every country added to the common stock of knowledge and civilization, and that under all the unfavorable conditions of which I have spoken. The Jewish philosophers have stood second to none. The Jewish statesmen have been among the most eminent in the world. Jewish teachers, and scholars, and literary men, and scientists, and artists have ranked with the ablest in Europe, and they do to-day. It will not do to say that they are the genius of intelligence and administration in Europe; but I may venture to say that they are

second to no others in these respects. To-day in music, in painting, in histrionic art, in finance, and in generalship, the Hebrews are equal to any among the most favored, whether in Europe or in America. Considering their opportunities, they are certainly giving more genius to statesmanship and administration and finance than any other people.

What have they, then, of which they need be ashamed, in a Christian republic where all men are declared to be free and equal? Of what has this oriental nation to be ashamed in a country where Christianity has breathed a spirit of manhood? Is it that they are excessively industrious? Let the Yankee cast the first stone. Is it that they are inordinately keen in bargaining? Have they ever stolen ten millions of dollars at a pinch from a city? Are our courts bailing out Jews, or compromising with Jews? Are there Jews lying in our jails, and waiting for mercy, and dispossessing themselves slowly of the enormous wealth which they have stolen? You cannot find one criminal Jew in the whole catalogue. It is said that the Jews are crafty and cunning, and sometimes dishonest, in their dealings. Ah! what a phenomenon dishonesty must be in New York! Do they not pay their debts when it is inconvenient? Hear it, O ye Yankees! Was there ever any such thing known on the face of the earth before? Is it true that they live on that which you throw away? What a miscreant a man must be that is so closely economical! Is it true that they can make money where you go to bankruptcy? Shame on you!—not on them. Is it true that they have among them many who are untrustworthy? I suppose

they must be the only people on God's earth any portion of whom are not trustworthy! Now I suppose there are Jews that are sometimes tempted of the devil; I suppose there are crafty men among the Jews; but I believe that for their numbers there are fewer such men among them than among us, and that of men of high and honorable dealing with enormous interests at stake, of trustworthy men in the administration of affairs, they have more in proportion to their numbers than our own or any other race-stock, in this or any other land.

If, then, you look upon their genius, upon their antiquity, upon their early and continuing services, upon the legacy which they have given to the gentile world, upon their fidelity to their faith, upon their heroism, upon their industry; upon their enterprise, and upon their substantial integrity, they are of all people under the sun the last that should be insulted, either by retail or by wholesale. And if in all the world you had sought for a place in which to base an insult for mere race you could not have found another where it would have been so disreputable as in America, where the race spirit is opposed to our fundamental interpretation of religion not only, but of morality and of civic economy. But of all places in America where society attempts to keep its garments free from contact with the vulgar people, think of a hotel; and of all hotels a thousand-room hotel in Saratoga! Listen, O ye astonished people: where for fifty years North and South and East and West have come together, and been instructed, sometimes by ministers and sometimes by Morrisseys, and where every form of pleasurable vice, every sort of amusement, every-

thing that would draw custom, has been common—there, in Saratoga, the Corinth of America, in a hotel designed to accommodate two thousand people, it seems society is so developed that it will not consent to go unless everybody that comes is fit to associate with men who made their money yesterday, or a few years ago, selling codfish! What is society in America? It is a disposition to be independent. The power of a man to take care of himself and his family by his own wit and industry—that makes a man respectable in so far as economics is concerned; and it is not in good taste for a man that inherits all his money, and does not earn a dollar himself, to reproach men who have not a dollar that they did not earn themselves. Of all people in creation the Hebrews least deserve the ban, the finger of scorn, the ostracism, of polite society. The trouble is, men have not been to school enough to learn the decency which belongs to the instruction of the Jews, to their institutions, and to their fundamental ideas of manhood and religion.

Are these people aiding or are they quenching civilization in our land? Are they bearing their part in the advance of knowledge in America? Are they educating their children? Are they publishing books and newspapers? Are they opening synagogues? Are they the corrupters of morality? Is it in the Jewish family that the monstrous spawn is bred that degrades Christian households? It was left for Christian reformers to unloose the bands and throw open the door to every foul solicitation and every base temptation that plays about every household in the land. Are the Jews

remiss in rearing their children in those elements of education and training which go to make a character distinguished for virtue, integrity and manhood?

Are they in our poor-houses? In which? Are they in our jails? Where? Are they in our reformatories? Point them out. Do their women defile our streets? You cannot find another people in America among whom the social virtues are more rigorously taught and observed than among the Israelites. Exceptions there are, but their characteristics are such as I have represented them to be. They are a temperate people, and we are a drunken people. They are a virtuous people, and we largely tend to be a lascivious people. They are a people excessively careful of their children, and there is a great laxity among us in the education of the household. We may well take lessons of them. They were the schoolmasters of our fathers, and we may well go to school to the same masters.

They are becoming land-owners in America, by reason of the liberty and toleration which reign here; and as land-owners those very peculiarities which made them offensive at other times are dropping away from them. There can be no question that the Jewish race stock, if it be suffered in the largest spirit of true Christianity to have its way, will merge with the American stock. During all the two thousand years in which the Jews have been wanderers on the globe, persecuted and despised, there has been no inducement for them to invest their money in landed estates, and their property has been of a moveable kind; but, they are now buying land in America: and I tell you the land that a people stand

on forms them more than they form the land by their agriculture; and more among us than anywhere else they become citizens. They come here to live and stay; and their children will intermarry with ours; their blood will flow into the common stream with ours; and if their virtues might be incorporated with ours it would be of unspeakable advantage to us. Where else, then, is prejudice against them so culpable as in our land?

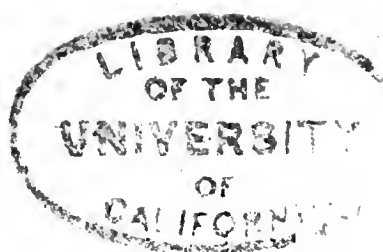
Let me say, in closing, that our brethren and fellow-citizens, the Jews, should not suffer themselves to be too much exercised by the petty slights or even public insults that are heaped upon them. A hero may be annoyed by a mosquito; but to put on his whole armor and call on all his followers to join him in making war on an insect would be beneath his dignity; and I think that for our friends, the Jews, to notice in any special manner this indignity which they have received will be to place too much importance upon it. I trust, therefore, that there will be no public assemblies called, no resolutions passed, no more unfortunate letters written, no recriminations, no personalities. We are fed to death with such things as these, until the people have come to have almost a butcher's appetite. So let us banish, and let us exhort those whom we are proud to call fellow-citizens to banish wrath; and may they recognize that their position, their honors, all things that are sacred to them, are, in this country, such as they shall themselves determine them to be. May they understand that under this government there is no place to which they may aspire—no sphere of finance, no walk in literature, no avenue to honor, no field of art or science—which is shut

to them. The heaven above their head is not more free to every one of them than all the ways of men in this land. Let them be composed, and not be disturbed by injuries which are but the faintest echoes of the wrongs which were inflicted on their fathers through unnumbered generations. If their fathers, when the foot of tyranny was placed upon their necks, when they were treated to the flame and the cord and the ax, when they tasted the luxury of the dungeon, when they were pelted with all manner of obloquy, when they were driven hither and thither and were wanderers up and down the earth, in patience possessed themselves, and maintained their economy, their institutions and their genius, I am sure their descendants will be able, under this slight breath, this white frost, this momentary flash of insult, to maintain their genius, their households, their social customs, their citizenship and the honors which their fathers achieved, and of which they are showing themselves not to be unworthy in this nation and in our time.

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